

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05 CIEP-01

TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04

SIL-01 L-03 H-02 NEA-10 SAM-01 SAJ-01 DODE-00 PM-04

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5539

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 30782

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH THOUGHTS ON EVE OF GISCARD'S VISIT TO
ROME

1. SUMMARY: ON EVE GISCARD'S ATTENDANCE COUNCIL OF
EUROPE MEETING IN ROME, FRENCH ARE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT
PROSPECTS GOI'S MEDIUM-TERM ECONOMIC PLAN. ALTHOUGH
QUAI STILL EXPECTS GOI TO MUDDLE THROUGH TILL NEXT
SPRING OR LONGER, WE SENSE SOME GREATER CONCERN THAN IN
PAST OVER LONGER-TERM ITALIAN POLITICAL PROSPECTS. IN
THIS CONNECTION QUAI, ON STRICTLY PERSONAL, INFORMAL
BASIS, ALSO EXPRESSED DOUBTS AS TO POLITICAL EFFECT
RECENT US STATEMENTS WITH RESPECT TO THE PCI. END
SUMMARY.

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2. FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S ATTENDANCE AT
COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING IN ROME DECEMBER 1 AND 2

OFFERED US OPPORTUNITY TO ASK FOR BRIEF UPDATING OF QUAI VIEWS ON ITALIAN MATTERS.

3. AS FOR PURELY ITALIAN ASPECTS OF GISCARD'S TRIP, QUAI ITALIAN DESK OFFICER DEBENEST DESCRIBED SCHEDULED MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT LEONE AND THE POPE AS LARGELY PROTOCOLARY. QUAI ASSUMES POPE WILL RAISE LEBANESE SITUATION IN VIEW VATICAN'S OWN MEDIATION EFFORT. LEONE AND GISCARD MAY ALSO FIND IT MUTUALLY INTERESTING TO COMPARE NOTES ON THEIR MOSCOW TRIPS. HOWEVER, WE ARE TOLD QUAI HAS PREPARED NO SUBSTANTIVE BRIEFINGS FOR EITHER CALL AND HAS CONFINED ITSELF TO GIVING GISCARD A SUMMARY OF CURRENT ITALIAN INTERNAL TRENDS.

4. ON THIS SCORE, WE FOUND QUAI A SHADE LESS SANGUINE PARTICULARLY FOR THE LONGER TERM, THAN IT HAD BEEN LAST SUMMER (PARIS 19716). DEBENEST DESCRIBED GOI'S RECENTLY ISSUED MEDIUM-TERM ECONOMIC PLAN AS TOO VAGUE TO CATCH ON AS MEANINGFUL BASIS FOR MUCH-NEEDED ITALIAN ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION; PARTICULARLY SINCE, AS FAR AS QUAI IS AWARE, GOI HAD NOT MADE SUFFICIENT EFFORTS TO GAIN NEEDED TACIT SOCIALIST SUPPORT. AS DEBENEST PUT IT, IT IS HARD TO SELL A PLAN WHICH "EVEN AGNELLI THINKS IS DEFICIENT." AS RESULT, PRESENTATION OF MEDIUM-TERM PLAN HAS LITTLE CHANCE OF GAINING SUFFICIENT PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT AND IS THEREFORE LIKELY IN QUAI VIEW TO CONTRIBUTE FURTHER TO POLARIZATION ITALIAN SITUATION.

5. EVEN SO, QUAI ASSUMES PRESENT ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL LAST THROUGH WINTER AND PERHAPS EVEN THROUGH NEXT SPRING, SINCE NEITHER SOCIALISTS NOR COMMUNISTS SEEM PREPARED TO FORCE NEW GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS. EVEN THEN, ITALIANS ARE LIKELY TO MUDDLE ALONG FOR A WHILE LONGER, SINCE COMMUNISTS FEEL THEMSELVES SO WELL POSITIONED THAT THEY MAY NOT BE INTERESTED IN FORCING SITUATION. PRINCIPAL SHORT-TERM QUESTION, ABOUT WHICH QUAI SEEMS CONCERNED,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 30782

INVOLVES FUTURE OF MAYORALTY OF ROME, A SUBJECT ABOUT WHICH WE HERE KNOW VERY LITTLE." IN QUAI VIEW, GOOD DEAL WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER IN NEXT ROME ELECTIONS (WHENEVER THAT IS), ROME WILL PASS INTO HANDS OF PCI MAYOR.

6. WHILE QUAI CONTINUES TO BELIEVE IN ITALIAN GIFT FOR SURVIVAL, DEBENEST SEEMED MORE CONCERNED THAN IN THE PAST ABOUT LONGER-RUN PROSPECTS, SINCE QUAI HAS DIFFICULTY ENVISAGING FORMATION OF SUFFICIENTLY BROADLY BASED ITALIAN GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF INTERNAL REFORM. IN THIS CONTEXT DEBENEST FOR FIRST TIME REFERRED TO THE US STATEMENTS ON ITALY REFLECTING US OPPOSITION TO PCI PARTICIPATION IN ANY FUTURE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH QUAI FULLY UNDERSTANDS AND IN LARGE PART SHARES MOTIVES UNDER-CONFIDENTIAL

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LYING THESE STATEMENTS, DEBENEST THOUGHT, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, THAT THEY WOULD NOT HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT OF STIMULATING SIGNIFICANT INTERNAL REFORM AMONG THE ITALIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. ON CONTRARY, DEBENEST FEARED THEY WOULD ONLY REINFORCE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC SELF-CONFIDENCE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME WIDENING RATHER THAN NARROWING SPLIT WITH THE LEFT, INCLUDING THE ITALIAN SOCIALISTS. COMMENT: WHILE DEBENEST AT SEVERAL POINTS STRESSED THE INFORMAL NATURE OF THESE REMARKS, WE BELIEVE THEY DO ACCURATELY REFLECT QUAI'S DOUBTS OVER USEFULNESS OF WESTERN, PARTICULARLY US CONFRONTATION

WITH WIDELY POPULAR PCI, WHOSE AT LEAST TACIT SUPPORT IS
CONSIDERED NECESSARY FOR LONGER TERM GOI STABILITY. END
COMMENT.

7. TURNING TO EXTERNAL MATTERS, DEBENEST SAID FRENCH
HAD FEW IF ANY SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS WITH ITALIANS APART
FROM THE WI ISSUE. FRENCH DO REMAIN CONSISTENTLY IN
TOUCH WITH ITALIANS ON MOST MEDITERRANEAN AND EEC ISSUES.
HOWEVER, DEBENEST SAID THAT APART FROM CONTINUING
EXCHANGES ON PERSISTENTLY TROUBLESOME QUESTIONS
SUCH AS CYPRUS, SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, NO MAJOR COMMON
EFFORT WAS UNDER DISCUSSION SUCH AS RENEWAL OF THE FORMER
FRENCH PROPOSAL FOR A MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE.
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